

Message Text

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SUBJ: ACTING FONMIN DISCUSSES IMPLICATIONS OF ARAB-
ISRAEL HOSTILITIES FOR US-YAR RELATIONS

1. ACTING FONMIN ASNAG AND MINISTER FOR DEVELOPMENT
SA'ID VISITED ME EVENING OCTOBER 8. IN A SERIOUS AND
SOMBER MOOD THEY DISCUSSED IMPLICATIONS OF CURRENT
ARAB-ISRAEL HOSTILITIES FOR US-YAR RELATIONS.

2. YEMENIS, ASNAG SAID, HAVE BECOME GENERALLY SKEPTICAL
ABOUT CHEST-POUNDING OF ARAB STATES TO NORTH. THEY ARE
NOT MUCH CONCERNED WITH ARAB-ISRAEL PROBLEM, PREFERRING
TO CONCENTRATE ENERGIES ON THEIR OWN DESPERATE PROBLEMS
OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT. 1973 IS NOT 1967 WHEN EGYPTIANS
WERE IN CONTROL IN YEMEN AND DELIBERATELY FANNED ANTI-
AMERICAN SENTIMENT. BUT YEMENIS ARE ARABS. DEVELOPMENTS
OF PAST TWO DAYS HAD STIRRED THEIR EMOTIONS. IF
TIDE OF WAR NOW BEGAN TO GO AGAINST EGYPT AND SYRIA,
AS IT PROBABLY WOULD IN VIEW ISRAELI AIR SUPERIORITY,
SENTIMENT AGAINST US, AS ISRAEL'S PROVIDER AND BACKER,
WOULD MOUNT.

3. CURRENT SITUATION, ASNAG REMARKED, WOULD
INEVITABLY SET BACK SOMEWHAT THE COURSE OF USG-YARG
RELATIONS AND PROGRAMS OF COOPERATION. OBJECTIVE SHOULD
BE TO LIMIT THE DAMAGE SO THAT WE COULD GET ON WITH PRO-
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GRAMS AFTER THE STORM HAD BLOWN OVER. IT PARTICULARLY

IMPORTANT THAT ANY INCIDENT INVOLVING EMBASSY PREMISES OR AMERICAN PERSONNEL BE AVOIDED. YARG INTENDED KEEP ITS FINGERS ON PULSE OF POPULAR SENTIMENT ESPECIALLY IN THE SCHOOLS WHICH PRINCIPALLY STAFFED BY EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN TEACHERS. IF EMOTIONS SEEMED TO BE RISING DANGEROUSLY, YARG WOULD TAKE THE LEAD IN SUGGESTING A PUBLIC RALLY--TO BE SAFELY CONTAINED IN THE SANAA FOOTBALL STADIUM. CURRENTLY, ASNAG SAID, DISCUSSIONS TAKING PLACE WITH MILITARY LEADERS TO PROVIDE DISCREETLY STEPPED-UP PROTECTION TO US, BRITISH AND FRENCH EMBASSIES. US EMBASSY, UNFORTUNATELY, WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE TARGET NUMBER ONE.

4. COMMENTING MORE GENERALLY, ASNAG SAID THAT WHEN HE HAD FIRST LEARNED THAT WAR HAD BROKEN OUT AT ARAB INITIATIVE AND THAT EGYPTIANS HAD CROSSED THE CANAL, HE HAD HOPED THAT FOR FIRST TIME IN 25 YEARS THERE MIGHT

ACTUALLY BE PROSPECT OF A GREAT MIDDLE EAST PEACE, IF EGYPT COULD REGAIN EVEN SOME SMALL PORTION OF LOST TERRITORY, THRICE-DEFEATED ARABS COULD HOLD UP THEIR HEADS AND NEGOTIATE REALISTICALLY. EGYPT'S RE-ACQUISITION OF BEACHHEAD EAST OF CANAL WOULD NOT ENDANGER ANY REAL ISRAELI SECURITY INTEREST. IF, AS NOW SEEMED LIKELY, EGYPTIANS AND SYRIANS WERE THROWN BACK BY AN ISRAELI GOVERNMENT DETERMINED ON FULL VENGEANCE, POST-HOSTILITY NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BE MOST UNLIKELY TO GET DOWN TO FUNDAMENTALS.

5. COMMENT: I WAS CONSIDERABLY TOUCHED BY ASNAG AND SAID VISIT WHICH I THOUGHT CHARACTERIZED THE RATHER SPECIAL CONSIDERATENESS, FRIENDSHIP AND COMMON SENSE WHICH SET THE YEMENIS APART.

6. ASNAG AND I AGREED WE WOULD STAY CLOSELY IN TOUCH. WAR HAS PUT HIS PLANS FOR NEW YORK VISIT IN LIMBO BUT HE STILL HOPES MAKE TRIP WHEN DUST CLEARS.
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